

session. (Col. 10, lines 18-22). The award of each welcome back bonus is made automatically following the pre-defined time threshold. Each welcome back bonus is in effect only as long as it takes to wager the earned bonus. (Col. 10, lines 28-43).

Upon insertion of the player tracking card into a card reader of a gaming machine, the identified player's record is retrieved from the DACOM host. A machine communications interface (MCI) calculates the total points and welcome back bonus points as they are earned. When enough welcome back bonus points have been earned, the MCI sets the welcome back earned bonus points status byte and clears the points towards the next award value. The latter value is not incremented as long as the earned flag bonus points status byte is set. The MCI also calculates the date and time at which a player will be qualified by adding a waiting time to the current date and time. When the player tracking card is removed from the card reader, the parameters are sent to the DACOM host for storage in the associated player record. When the player tracking card is inserted into a card reader of another gaming machine, the player record is retrieved from the DACOM host and is used by the associated MCI to control the welcome back bonus session. Once the data and time at which the player will be qualified has been met or exceeded, the MCI clears the earned flag bonus points status byte and add points for the welcome back bonus award to the total point balance. (Col. 12, lines 28-56).

Claims 1-7 and 16-19 Are Not Anticipated

A claim is anticipated when a single prior art reference discloses all features recited in the claim. Acres does not disclose all the features of claims 1-7 and 16-19.

Claim 1, for instance, calls for a gaming network comprising a gaming device including a base game and a secondary bonus feature. The secondary bonus feature is playable by players identified to the gaming device. Player tracking hardware is structured to identify a player of the gaming device. A player tracking system is structured to store data about gameplay of the player of the gaming device. A player processing system is structured to record a present state of the secondary bonus feature wherein the present state of the secondary bonus feature can be recalled from stored data during a subsequent gaming session. The secondary bonus feature includes a series of trigger events in which the secondary bonus feature advances to a non-initial state upon the occurrence of a trigger event. At a non-initial state, a player identified to the gaming device acquires an award randomly selected from a group of possible awards. At the end of the secondary bonus feature, the player is rewarded based on the number or types awards acquired.

The Acres system provides for the award of a welcome back bonus. The Acres system maintains a record of the number of points earned. The points earned are based on the amount

wagered. After a minimum number of points are earned, the welcome back bonus is awarded. Thus, there is a direct relationship between the amount wagered and the award of the welcome back bonus.

In contrast, in Applicants' claimed invention, when a non-initial state is reached, upon the occurrence of a trigger event, a player acquires an award randomly selected from a group of possible awards. At the end of the secondary bonus feature, that is, when the journey through the secondary bonus feature is complete, the random awards awarded at each non-initial state are analyzed and a player is rewarded based on the number or types of awards acquired. Thus, the random awards at each non-initial state determine the final award. This increases the overall randomness of the final award.

The Acres system does not operate in this way. The welcome back bonus is simply based on the total amount wagered by a player. A player cannot accumulate more than one bonus award during a single playing session. There is no randomly selected award acquired by a player from a group of possible awards. Also, the welcome back bonus is not based on the number or types of awards acquired at the end of this bonus feature. Rather, the Acres system is like an accounting system in which when enough money is wagered an award is made.

Conclusion

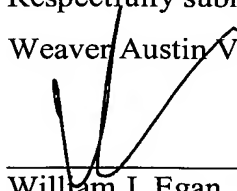
In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that all the claims are now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, allowance of the claims at the earliest possible date is requested.

If prosecution of this application can be assisted by telephone, the Examiner is requested to call Applicants' undersigned attorney at (510) 663-1100.

If any fees are due in connection with the filing of this amendment (including any fees due for an extension of time), such fees may be charged to Deposit Account No. 504480 (Order No. IGT1P288X1).

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Respectfully submitted,
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